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Fairhope in the Early Years:

The Color Scheme

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> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,
> it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness,
> it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity,
> it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness,
> it was the Spring of hope, it was the Winter of despair,
> we had everything before us, we had nothing before us,
> we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going
> direct the other way-- in short, the period was so far
> like the present period that some of its noisiest author-
> ities insisted on its being received for some good or for
> evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

Though Charles Dickens wrote about eighteenth century Europe in his A Tale of Two Cities, his description of the period could well have applied to America in the waning years of the nineteenth century. The nation was riding the wave of industrial capitalism into a new era: whether that wave would break gently on American land or would catch the country in an undertow, pulling society away from its foundations and scattering it on unknown shores was yet to be seen. But the nation followed its course of unbridled capitalism nonetheless; the wealthy prospered; the poor, clustered in the city slums, found themselves trapped in industrial drudgery and sought a way to escape the muck of the industrialization that had lured them to the city with visions of wealth and prosperity. Above all, it was a time of transition and transformation.

It was in the midst of such change that a band of eager colonists from Des Moines, Iowa, and other points north of the Mason-Dixon line set off for the generally unsettled land on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay in southern Alabama. Taking their possessions, their families, and

their dreams with them, they went to the area to from a single tax colony, attempting to practice the economic theories of Henry George. The colonists believed that all wealth derived from the possession of land. Those who happened to own the choicest parcels, they argued, earned great sums of money. But the high value of their land was not the result of their own efforts; rather it was created by the community. The Fairhopers sought to wipe out this "unearned increment" by taxing the full value of the land and returning the revenues to the community. Through common ownership of the land and the collection of these full rents, the single taxers believed they could end speculation and insure full economic opportunity for all. Optimistically christening their new home "Fairhope," the colonists from the North had come south to "make good theories work," and they quickly warmed to the task that lay ahead.

The choice of the Fairhope location for the experiment came about after a thorough search for an economic Garden of Eden. Though the soil was poorer than in the Midwest, the longer growing season and generally moderate weather lured the founders to the South. Lower land values in the region also made the experiment more feasible and seemed to bode well for its long term success. The site on Mobile Bay was more expensive than the other southern locations considered, but its unmatched beauty and its lure as a resort won the colonists over. Eventually, it would be the site of the longest running experimental economic community in the nation's history.

When the first Fairhopers arrived in 1894 they encountered a society that was radically different from that of their homeland. The Jim Crow system of forced segregation of blacks and whites had already begun to divide southern society along racial lines. Whether it be in transportation, housing, or entertainment, southern blacks found their

place in society increasingly restricted: "For Whites Only" became the sign of the times. Racial prejudice not only dominated southern ideology, it also molded southern institutions.

Integration of the races was probably no more prevalent in the North than it was in the South, but at least northern separation of the races was based more on simple custom than it was dictated by law. Neither were the roots of northern racial separation to be found in the deep hatred and true animosity that had marked southern segregation. If northern racial equality was absent in practice, at least it was present in theory, so it is understandable that the first colonists went to southern Alabama with some apprehensions about its racist inhabitants. One friend from the North wrote the colonists of his fears:

> I am constantly regretting that you have gone way down south and cast your lot with a congregation of people who can be of little or no value to you, composed mainly, I should judge, of persons more or less out of joint with the world; discontented, (unfortunate may be), misanthropic, fanatical and prejudiced in varying degrees of intensity.[1]

No doubt the colonists, upon arrival, did encounter southern ideologues who preached white supremacy and sought to maintain complete racial separation in the region. The Democratic party, which had firmly united the South behind the banner of white unity, dominated southern politics and controlled its institutions. Disfranchisement of blacks created a homogenous populus that voted with surprising uniformity on other issues. Perhaps more than at any other time before or since, the South of the early twentieth century was a Solid South that resented any outside interference in its internal policies.

But how did the Fairhope colonists deal with such people. In coming from a supposedly "enlightened" North, did the colonists find it difficult to melt into a southern society that had its roots firmly planted in racial prejudice? Or did their progressivism ever really

extend to racial equality. Could it be possible that their pleas for equality applied only to land use and totally ignored considerations of race.

As it turned out, Fairhope began and continued as a colony that excluded blacks from membership. Whether it was because of a concession made to its southern surroundings or because Fairhopers simply found the practice of racial equality more problematic in action than in theory, the colony never allowed Negroes to become members or to reside on colony land. The manner in which the colonists dealt with the exclusion of blacks in their "utopian" community provides the basis for one of the most interesting chapters in the colony's history, a chapter in which the necessity for racial separation meshes with genuine concern and respect for the black man; a chapter in which idealism and realism at once collide and come together.

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From the outset of the Fairhope story it becomes apparent that southerners did not have a monopoly on racial prejudice. The founders of the colony, in fact, revealed before the experiment even began that they too were concerned that the southern Negro might present problems for their mission. Writing for the Fairhope Courier, the colony's newspaper and propaganda sheet, S.S. Mann and James Bellangee, the two-man location search committee, discussed their fears of the Negro presence in the region:

> The presence throughout the south of the black man is a serious drawback to its development. The negro is not a progressive citizen; consequently, when the culture of the land was left to his individual efforts it began to deteriorate rather than to advance.... The price of lands in the negro sections is falling rather than rising. There is also a disinclination to sell to negroes. The dislike of a northern man to settle alone in a negro neighborhood makes it difficult for the owners of the lands to sell them, hence we found the price of lands in neighborhoods where northerners had got a foot-

ing higher than in sections where the negro predominated.[2] A prospective colonist from New York also expressed concern over the black "natives." Writing to E.B. Gaston, John Ettel asked: "Are there any negroes living in the immediate neighborhood? Do they behave themselves toward women? Any outrages lately?"[3]

Fears that the southern Negro would hinder their effort were not enough, however, to keep colonists from settling in the South. They came to Mobile Bay with genuine expectations of success, hoping to avoid any controversy over racial equality. Fairhope's founders apparently felt no remorse over the exclusion of blacks from the experiment; in fact, they cited the absence of blacks as an advantage of the Fairhope plan. Writing about the colony's progress in a 1903 article for the Single Tax Review, a national journal promoting the cause, Bellangee wrote: "People will no doubt be interested to know now we meet the negro question, In fact, before we went there, we were somewhat concerned over that ourselves. In actual practice we never had to meet it. No negroes have ever applied for memberships, nor do we expect they will.... We have been exceedingly fortunate in avoiding the question , or in dealing with it in such a way as to arouse the prejudice of the Southern white or the dislike of the colored people."[4]

Actually, the colony had not been entirely able to avoid the question of race. Within a year of their arrival, the colonists found themselves faced with the problem of removing Delilah Washington and Nancy Lewis, two black women, from land that the colony had purchased. Little is known of Delilah Washington, save a single reference to her in the colony's minutes of 1895 which noted her evacuation from the land on which she had lived.[5] Nancy Lewis's story, though, has been detailed by historian Paul Gaston. In being removed from colony land, she was paid $100 for the improvements thereon.[6] A subsequent displace-

ment was prevented when the colony, at the discretion of its secretary, E.B. Gaston, graciously decided not to purchase an attractive 40 acre tract on which she had made her new home.[7]

These measures to exclude blacks from colony land did not, in fact, stem from any written provisions that specifically prohibited Negroes in the experiment. Rather , they were the result of an unwritten rule of racial exclusion that found its silent backing in a section of the constitution that allowed 10% of the colony's members to reject a membership request. For those who refused to settle in the colony if Negroes were allowed, this provision implied that they could be easily excluded. But it also proved to be a drawback in attracting a minority who demanded racial equality and who supported the inclusion of blacks in the experiment. In response to one such critic, the Courier responded:

> There is nothing in the constitution of Fairhope forbidding admission to membership of colored persons, though it may be safely taken for granted, we assume, that under the conditions in which Fairhope exists, no colored person could secure the approval of the majority of the members necessary to admission.
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> The criticism of out friend--the first of its kind ever made, while scores have protested against what he advocates-- illustrates anew the difficulties and differences of opinion arising in the effort to determine how far we can practically go in the application of correct theories within a general congition of applied incorrect ones, over which we have no controll.
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> We believe just as sincerely and fully in "universal equality"--equaltiy of rights, as our friend does, and doubt not that our actions as full demonstrate it, notwithstanding the admitted fact that a negro would probably be refused admittance to our association as a member.[8]

Indeed, in all other matters of racial equality, excluding the questions of residency and membership, the colony did seem to advance the cause of the Negro whenever possible, at least through the Courier. Ringing declarations for general equality are numerous. "The greatest political though in the world is embodied in the declaration of inde-

pendence, namely that all men are created equal," the Courier once wrote. "It simply means that God never gave to one human being a natural right that he denied to any other human beings, and that in contemplation of government, all must stand equal before the law."[10]

In a more direct plea for black rights the Courier criticized the proposed new constitution of Alabama in 1901, a constitution that, above all, sought to disfranchise black voters. Though editor Gaston found parts of the new constitution attractive, he refused to endorse the document as a whole, saying, "No meritorious features can, in our mind, over balance the evils of the suffrage provisions and as we cannot separate the good from the bad we must oppose the whole."[11]

As he did in this instance, E.B. Gaston continued to be the strongest advocate of black rights in the colony. His influence, of course, was understandably felt more that the others because of his position as editor of the colony's newspaper. But even given his position of prominence, Gaston's sense of justice and his calls for racial equality shone like a beacon for others in the colony to follow. Generally, however, such enlightened opinions were directed towards affairs outside the colony itself, as in a comment on the imperialiam exercised by the United States in dealing with the Phillipines: "No people can be trusted to preserve their own freedom who would deny her blessings to their humblest fellow man."[12]

Such a firm, unequivocal call for absolute rights might seem to contradict the colony's policy of excluding blacks, and thus is presented the major paradox of the Fairhope experience with regard to race: the founders of Fairhope, and certainly Gaston , would have agreed that equality of the races was a "good theory." They also proclaimed regularly that "good theories, properly applied" must work. Why, then, could this good theory of racial equality not be

workable in the structure of the Fairhope organization. As Gaston himself said in a Courier comment, "The man who thinks a good theory and does not work upon it, shows that he has little respect for his own opinions and will not win the respect of others."[13]

In answering this question, Gaston continually emphasized that the main goal of the colony was to practice the single tax: "To this end all minor questions or questions which would obscure the major purpose, should be relegated to the rear." Gaston continued,"Those who have spent some time in Fairhope are fully aware that any attempt to interfere with the accepted status of the races in this section would be to cause the chief purpose of Fairhope to be lost sight of."[14]

Gaston's appraisal of the situation was certainly an accurate one. Fairhope's southern neighbors were generally impressed with the efforts of the colony; they remained skeptical and kept a safe distance from the "radical" colonists, but they did wish Fairhopers well in their experiment and hoped for the colony's success. As one neighbor remarked on the fourth anniversary of the colony:

> Above everything you have impressed me that you have come here to stay; to make this your home and to become one of our people--and in doing so you have not brought the solving of the negro question with you. Whatever might be your shortcomings, be your religious and political convictions what they may, the people of the South will extend the hand of welcome to you when you come as you have come. We will not welcome any man or woman to our land, who tries to place the negro on a social equality with the Anglo-Saxon race.[15]

Fairhope could not have succeeded as a racially mixed community, plain and simple; southern prejudice and animosity towards the black man would have doomed any experiment that threatened to alter the racial status quo. Gaston wrote about the matter: " In the present condition of public sentiment in the South it is best for both races that every opportunity for friction should be avoided that can be."[16]

But what if Fairhopers had settled in the North rather than in the Land of Dixie: would they have included blacks in their single tax experiment? A similar land value tax colony in Arden, Delaware, had been negatively dubbed "interracial" because Negroes had comprised a fair portion of its early leaseholders. But the founders welcomed the interracial aspect as "evidence of the fundamental democratic character" of the community.[17] Would Fairhopers have done the same? Though some implied that blacks would have been welcomed under different circumstances, much of what Fairhopers wrote and said tends to suggest that blacks would have been a hindrance, and certainly not desired, in any colonization effort that was headed by whites.

The Fairhope colonists had desired to prove a pure theory in their experiment with the single tax, and as history has recorded, pure theories rarely work in the real world. Accordingly, the colonists had to alter their theory somewhat while at the same time altering the world in which they attempted to practice it. A hundred dollar membership fee was not a part of Henry George's theory but was necessitated in order to but land. Acceptance of non-single taxers as lessees had not been a part of the initial plan, but was necessary for the colony's survival. And restriction of membership to whites would not seem in harmony with a theory that hoped to deliver equality of opportunity for all people; the colonists, however, argued that the restriction was simply an attempt to promote an atmosphere conducive to the success of the single tax theory.

At the heart of the race question, as the Courier so often asserted, was an economic question. Bearing the marks of a system that had supposedly terminated thirty years earlier, blacks had found that their emancipation was less than liberating. Gaston remarked of the situation:

> They were given a semblance of freedom-- nominally the freedom to go where they would and work for whom they pleased; but they remained literally 'serfs of the soil.' If they received more in return for their labors as slaves than they have received since slavery was abolished, it simply demonstrates that the new form of slavery, which instead of owning the slave, owns the resources on and by which only the slave can employ his freed labor, is a more effective form of slavery than the other.[18]

Blacks were excluded from the Fairhope experiment not because of their skin color, the Courier argued, so much as because hundreds of years of slavery and slow economic development had relegated them to a lower economic level. The Courier advanced this colorblind hypothesis by pointing to acts of racial violence in the North. The North, it argued, had never exhibited that which in the South was known as "racial prejudice."[19] Northerners would not, then, solely on the basis of skin color, discriminate against anyone. But because blacks had been fixed so long as an inferior servile class they were willing to work for lower wages, thus incurring the wrath of yankee workers whose jobs they were taking. Therefore, the Courier reasoned, when Northerners acted with violence against the black masses they did so with economic motives, and only incidentally did their actions hurt Negroes the most. Fairhopers could not immediately undo the economic wrongs that had been inflicted on blacks, the Courier insisted; their only hope was that in practicing the single tax they might "help educate the people to acceptance of (the) policy by an example of its benefits."[20] As soon as the masses recognized the merits of land value taxation and began to practice it on a large scale, they reasoned, blacks would finally achieve the economic equality that was necessary to eliminate racial discrimination. In this way Fairhope would work against the economic faults of a system that had produced racial prejudice without attempting to strike at racial prejudice directly. In time, they believed

that their efforts with the single tax would ameliorate the Negro condition through curing the disease rather than through treating the symptoms.

To prove that the colonists were sincere in their desire to help blacks economically some Fairhopers even went so far as to encourage the establishment of a Negro single tax community in the vicinity. "For obvious reasons," Gaston wrote," it is not desirable that negroes should be admitted to membership or residence in Fairhope proper." But he added that if a nearby tract could be secured upon which blacks could settle and organize a colony similar to the Fairhope one "it would be an excellent thing for them and us, as well as greatly enlarging the possible magnitude of our demonstration of the advantage of the single tax." [21]

To that end, several of the colony's leaders met with neighboring blacks on several occasions to explain the single tax theory and encourage its adoption. At one such gathering, Gaston suggested the special importance of the land question to blacks in particular. In a Courier recap of his message to the blacks, Gaston wrote that he had told his audience "that while with Lincoln's proclamation they were technically freed they had still, most of them, along with millions of whites, been enslaved by conditions, so that their labor was still bringing them only board and clothes, as in the days of chattel slavery."[22]

Blacks seemed interested in the possibility of such a colony and apparently met several times on their own to consider the issue. But nothing concrete ever came out of the movement, and it was subsequently abandoned. Perhaps blacks found it difficult to consider giving up the land that they had just recently been allowed to own. A Negro single tax colony near Fairhope was never to be, though the Courier did men-

tion with enthusiasm the prospect for a Negro single tax colony in Africa.[23] A black law student from Detroit had promoted the concept, and though the eventual fate of such a colony is unknown, it is probably safe to assume that it never came about either.

Strong doubts remain, however, whether the colonists truly believed that racial prejudice was primarily a function of economic conditions. Much evidence, in fact, points to the conclusion that some colonists, as much as they tried not to, really felt that black economic woes were the result of basic racial deficiencies. In the tradition of the classic egg vs. chicken debate, the colonists must have questioned which came first: racial inferiority or economic discrimination. Their overall conclusion was clear, however: blacks were different when it came to their work habits and abilities. Like it or not, they were a breed apart. Like other Americans, from the North as well as from the South, the Fairhope colonists had internalized the racial values of an age. The assumption of black inferiority was such a widespread phenomenon that even those who called themselves "progressives" accepted the idea that blacks were substandard beings.

In comment on labor unrest in Pana, Illinois, for instance, the Courier repeated an article form the Mobile Register. In an attempt to replace striking miners in the town, the mine owners considered bringing in black workers from Alabama. The resisting white miners "have run against a hard and invincible fact," the article asserted. "They cannot live as cheaply as the negro, they cannot support their families on what a negro will take for his day's labor, because a negro wants little for himself... and assumes few domestic obligations."[24] Of course, these traits were the result of the race's traditional subservient status, but the implication that blacks could live on less than any white man could reinforces the idea that, as a race, they

were undeniably, and perhaps irrevocably, destined to remain at a lower level of civilization than the white man.

In printing a well-received book review of The Brother's War, a Civil War documentary, the Courier again contributed to the idea that blacks were basically inferior as a race. As the reviewer noted, "It treats of the race question with the kindly sympathy of one who knows the best and weakest side of a race so strangely placed in the way of progress towards a better civilization."[25] Calling the Negroes an "undeveloped people," the reviewer strengthened the theory that blacks were struggling on the ladder of evolution to raise themselves to the exhalted level of the Caucasion race. Blacks were not only an unfortunate people, the writer asserted; they were a hindrance to the progress of civilization as a whole. It was as if God had created the Negro race as an affliction on whites, testing the faith of the chosen people with an unfortunate and dark curse.

There should be no doubt, though, that Fairhopers wished their dark skinned brothers well in this struggle to ameliorate the condition of their race. They desired the progress of the black man, even if their own contribution to the cause was necessarily an indirect one. But Fairhoperes perceived the steps that blacks would have to take as being different from the steps that a poor white man might take. The remedy was different because the problem was different. The colonists would certainly have agreed with Booker T. Washington when he urged blacks to go back to the land to learn how to own and "Cultivate intellectually and skillfully the soil, " warning them to keep out of the large cities, especially those of the North.

Racial prejudice in the Courier is usually not evidenced through direct comment, though; perhaps far more telling are the off-the-cuff statements and bits of humor that the Courier published from time to

time. For it is in such references that the colonists' theories of racial equality are betrayed by lighthearted remarks that reveal "innocent" prejudices. It is here that white perceptions of the black laborer are perhaps their most honest. In general, the caricature of the black worker, as depicted by whites, is one of an incompetent lazy soul, happy with his low station in life and unable to alter it even if he is dissatisfied. For example, in its early years, the Courier relayed to its readers the opinion of a friend of the colony's who had just visited the site. "Mr. Stewart, who has been in educational work in Iowa for many years, we found a very intelligent man on many lines.... As he left (he said that) he was satisfied that there was 'no nigger in the woodpile' but that it was a straightforward, bona fide effort for the equal benefit of all who went into it."[27] Though Stewart's comment was perhaps innocent enough, it nevertheless has racial implications that are too obvious to ignore. Prejudice against blacks was so ingrained in the southern psyche that it was simply taken for granted . Racial slurs seemed as much a part of day to day living as saying grace at the dinner table.

Marie Howland, a brilliant and dedicated trooper for the Fairhope cause also revealed the prevailing sentiment in an anecdote of a black boy named Tony. She wrote in her regular Courier column of how the boy, who often helped her do work at her home, was assisting her in weeding the vegetable garden:

> I had supervised his cutting down the forest of asparagus stalks and was showing him how to dig up the surface of the bed very lightly when I was interrupted by Cherub Gaston with some catalog proofs which I was to read while he waited. Giving Tony a pressing injunction to be extra careful about digging lightly, as the mattock was not the right instrument for the work, I went in and hurriedly read the proofs. When I returned to the garden Tony sat on the wheelbarrow amid the ruin that he had made, as

> imperturbable as the "Sphinx at Ghizeh." The long white fleshy roots of the asparagus lay all about. "I tot dey'se weeds,' was his answer to my expostulations. I console myself by the fact that the bed needed thinning out, but whether in a style so heroic remains to be seen.[28]

Admittedly, the story could just as easily have been told without racial reference, but the use of the thick black dialect and the vivid description of this little "Sambo" make it more amusing. The racial reference is even more important when we consider that Howland was among the most radical of the Fairhope colonists. An intellectual socialist reformer, she came to Mobile Bay with exceptional vigor and progressive convictions. That even Marie Howland would tell a racilly slanted joke illustrates the scope of prejudice at the turn of the century. It seemed a permanent part of our culture.

Another joke that the Courier carried dealt with a young black man named Mr. Cracker who was fired from his job so often that he picked up the name "Fire Cracker." And in still another reference to race the paper ran this item:"Fwhat's the use 'o tillin' a man to begin at th' foot o' th' ladder?" said Terrence. "That's the way I began saxteen years ago an' I'm shtill a hod carrier begobs."[30] The actual meaning of Terrence's words might escape us today, but the resulting impression is the same: Negro workers will always be at the foot of the economic ladder that he mentions; the Negro, whites believed, was simply disadvantaged to the point of no return.

The perception of blacks' inferiority in the workforce was not confined solely to southern whites, or even to Americans, for that matter. Indeed, the entire prevailing Anglo-Saxon ideology was one that characterized the Negro as a substandard employee. As Sir George Campbell, a British scholar wrote in an essay on the character and capacity of blacks,"The Negroes are certainly not a race remarkable for energy and force under difficulties." He added :"On the whole, I

think it must be considered that at present, whether from natural defects or for want of cultivation, they are to a certain extent inferior to white men in the qualities which lead to higher grades of employment."[31]

Of course, we run a risk in placing too much emphasis on the preceeding sources; though the Courier carried jokes and items that were prejudiced, it is important to note that many of them were written by people outside the colony. Fairhopers themselves did not generally demonstrate racial prejudice to the extent that outsiders did. But the fact that the Courier published even mildly derogatory statements suggests that some of the colonists shared unspoken assumptions of black inferiority.

Part of this racial prejudice might be due to a slowly creeping southern attitude toward race that had infected the Fairhope colony, but if so, it resulted from outside influences and not because the colony had taken in many single taxers from the Land Of Dixie. Even in 1906, twelve years after the experiment had begun in the deep south location, the group was predominantly northern. In that year, at a Civil War soldier's reunion, veterans from the Union forces outnumbered those from the Confederacy seventeen to two.[32] Inevitably and expectedly, the colonists from the North had taken on some southern characteristics as they melted into southern society, and unfortunately, racial prejudice was a prominent one.

At any rate, any suggestion that blacks should be included in the colony was rejected in order to preserve the experiment itself. Success of the project would hardly be guaranteed by having agreable neighbors-- the colony would have to prove its theory on its own-- but trying to prove the single tax theory in an area enraged over the race question would have been much more difficult.

Another interesting factor that worked against bi-racial membership was the fear that black ownership would decrease land values. Even in a colony that hoped to end land speculation, there were concerns over the speculative value of the colony land. "To open our land to negroes would be to depreciate its value," Gaston wrote. In a response to W.W. Kile who wrote to the Courier to complain about the exclusion of blacks, Gaston continued:"We question seriously whether our friend would take a lot knowing that the colony would feel bound to accept the application of a negro for a lot alongside of him. We are very sure that he would not take a lot where his neighbors on either side of him were negroes."

Ironically, one can imagine that, under certain circumstances, a colonist might desire to live in a Negro neighborhood. After all if land were valued less in a black area, then it would be taxed accordingly. A merchant in a black neighborhood might find that the loss of white customers would far outweigh any tax savings, but a farmer who needed the land solely for agricultural purposes might relish the thought of lower taxation. After all, his harvest would hardly be adversely affected because the land was in an undesirable neighborhood. The illustration simply suggests that even Fairhopers may have had doubts as to the universal application of the single tax theory. If negative influences,such as poverty,were included in the experiment, they questioned whether the theory would work. Therefore they tried to create an environment that they believed was most conducive to success. That this environment did not mirror the outside world was a necessary flaw in the Fairhope experiment that they hoped would go unnoticed by its critics.

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In the Courier response to Kile that was mentioned earlier, E.B. Gaston went on to write: "Negroes in general and in this vicinity have no better friends than the people of Fairhope, and intelligent negroes who desire the success of our effort and the welfare of their own people have approved the colony's policy (of racial exclusion)."[33] From all indications, Gaston was telling the truth, for almost every mention of the Negro community in the Courier bears the positive slant that one might expect from a progressive organization, even if it had to come from a respectable distance. Indications are that relations between the races were congenial, certainly in part because the Courier promoted good feelings between blacks and whites in the area.

The paper reported activities in the Negro community with regularity, generally accentuating positive contributions that blacks made to the town. In discussing the area Negroes' efforts to provide education for their children Gaston wrote that the "colored people of the vicinity show a very commendable interest in education, and we hope they will get their school matters in satisfactory shape."[34] The Courier reported the construction of a large meeting hall by the black Masons of the area with similar assurances of support.[35] The paper promoted good religious relations as well. At one point in 1905 a notice was posted throughout Fairhope suggesting that blacks did not want town whites to attend their church services. The church's black minister firmly asserted that the notice had been false and reiterated that whites were indeed welcome, to which the Courier breathed a sigh of relief: "We are glad the notices referred to are disclaimed by the pastor, especially because of their implication that white visitors to the colored church were so misbehaving themselves as to make their presence unwelcome. We are glad to be assured that such is not the

case."[36]

At other times the Courier spoke out against the poll tax [37] and lynchings,[38] issues that were understandably important to all blacks. Simple personal notices, such as the expression of sorrow over the death of a black citizen,[39] also show that the Courier, and the members of the colony in general, were sensitive to black feelings and concerns. When the paper could point to any examples of Negro progress or was able to promote black pride, it did so. There are numerous notices of the achievements of black fishermen and farmers. One short piece in 1908 told of Sam McCord, a black farmer who had realized profits from working a two acre farm near Marion, Alabama. As if such an account were unbelievable, the article assured readers that the "gentlemen visiting McCord's farm are two of Perry's most successful farmers, and their statement can be relied on as true."[40] Another edition included an account of a planned Negro city in West Virginia which was to be governed and inhabited solely by blacks. The Courier asserted that all would "watch with interest the progress of the experiment as testing the capacity of the negroes for self-government."[41]

At other times, however, subtle indirect references to race were not so helpful in promoting a positive view of the Negro. One filler piece revealed:"Among African tribes it is customary to torture prisoners of war. One of the legs of the prisoner is pushed through a hole in a heavy log and a spike driven through to hold it in place."[42] Though perhaps factual, the piece certainly did little to dispell the notion that blacks were , in their "purest state," still savages at heart. The same conclusion can be drawn from another tidbit that asserted,"They gray eye is an almost universal characteristic of great intellect. Black eyes, on the other hand, indicate an ardent temper."[43]

Such negative references to blacks , however, are few in the Courier, and the overall attitude towards race is a progressive one.

And yet how could the colonists be considered progressives in the area of race relations while at the same time they excluded blacks from their community with an almost religious zeal. Especially considering that the foundations of Fairhope were laid just as Progressivism emerged on the national scene, it seems even more odd that progress towards racial equality came at a snail's pace. After all, Progressive reformers had quickly revolutionized business, government, and education in America with incredible success. Why, then, did they not also usher race relations into the twentieth century?

As the title of a chapter in C. Vann Woodward's Origins of the New South points out, however, Progressivism was "For Whites Only." In some instances, such as with voter disfranchisement, the exclusion of blacks was considered to be a positive reform. In an attempt to create the "perfect" society, many Progressives simply preferred to eliminate the black and ignore his special concerns rather than working to improve his condition. To suggest that Fairhopers were progressive in racial matters, then, should not imply that they were crusaders for the cause. Rather, it means that they were at least openminded, encouraging, and optimistic about blacks at a time when many preferred to ignore them entirely. Still, however, the colony relegated racial equality to a very low position on its list of reform concerns. Fairhope simply began in an era when black civil rights failed to concern many reformers.

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In their theories, then, the Fairhopers were ambivalent, but conceded that the black man could not fit into their own experiment.

In their rhetoric, as presented in the Courier, they were generally supportive of the rights of the Negro race as a whole. The question remains, however, as to how Fairhopers dealt with area blacks in the execution of their single tax experiment. Although Negroes were prohibited from living on colony land, they did constitute a sizable portion of the Baldwin County population: over 30% in 1900. Their presence must have certainly been strongly felt in day to day dealings with colony members and could not be avoided or ignored.

The colony's need for policy on racial matters was ,of course, limited by its exclusion of blacks. The eventual incorporation of the town in 1908, a move apparently opposed by area blacks,[44] placed single taxers and non-single taxers under one government, also making it difficult to discern the effect that the colony alone had on racial questions thereafter. But the colony's policy with regard to blacks was nevertheless apparent in many instances, sometimes revealing the painful steps that Fairhopers had to take in order to enforce racial segregation.

One such instance is that of the so-called "Murray children." In november of 1904 a controversy arose over whether three children seeking admission to the colony school were white or not. A special meeting of the members of the Fairhope colony was called to consider the matter and resulted in the appointment of a committee to learn whether the children were of unmixed white blood,[45] for if any were deemed to have black blood, they would automatically be prohibited from attending the school there. Even in Fairhope, segregation was to be rigidly enforced.

The census of 1900 noted only one Murray family in Baldwin County, that of John Murray, his wife, five children, and two grand-

children. Murray was a Swiss born carpenter and both of his parents were white. His wife, Sarah, was the daughter of white parents as well, having been born and raised in Alabama. The census lists their children--Andrew, Henry, Richard, Edward, and Clara -- and two granddaughters, Katie Pierre and Jessie Pierre. These grandchildren were two of the three that the investigation concerned. All members of the household were recorded as being white.[46]

Earlier census data, however, do indicate some Negro connections. The census of 1880 lists John and Sarah Murray, and their sons Andrew and Henry; but it also includes Mary Murray, a six year old mulatto girl whose relationship to the family is not specified.[47] Whether she was an adopted child or simply the product of a previous racially mixed marriage involving John or Sarah is not disclosed. It is possible, however, that she may have been the mother of Katie and Jessie Pierre, explaining their being listed as the grandchildren of John and Sarah Murray as well as indicating that they could have been mulatto.

At any rate, the investigation of the committee was inconclusive, although H.C. Oswald, its chairman, reported that the available evidence raised a doubt in his mind as to whether the children were of unmixed blood.[48] Apparently, no action was taken on the matter, but the simple fact that a special investigation was demanded overshadows the actual facts of the case. It reveals the extent to which Fairhopers were concerned with race; the slightest trace of Negro blood was enough to exclude someone from colony activities.

In 1907 the issue of racial exclusion again created a controversy when the colony council passed a motion that no more colored excursions from Mobile be permitted to the use of the wharf and grounds of the Fairhope beach.[49] In response to criticism of the action, E.B. Gaston defended the measure. Apparently two black men had recently created a

stir when they swam naked in the water, clearly visible to white women on the shore. Arguing that such actions would lead to uncontrollable violence if they continued, Gaston wrote,"The throwing of the races together in masses in their idle times, when because of drink and strange environment the usual restraints are apt to be lost sight of, is one of the most fruitful causes of trouble in our observation."[50]

Fifteen years later a similar conflict emerged and again blacks were restricted. Complaints that Negroes had been monopolizing facilities in the beach park were referred by the colony council to the Beach Committee. The committee passed a motion that notices be placed in the area reading: "Private property, no loitering of colored people allowed."[51] Thus, as the years passed, it would seem that blacks in Fairhope found their place increasingly restricted.

But the actions of the colonists must be viewed in the context of the time and place in which they were made. If the previous actions seem unfair and racist by modern standards, they most assuredly were not perceived as such in the early years of this century. Other actions taken by the colonists indicate that Fairhopers were far and away more progressive and less prejudiced that their peers outside the colony. They did hope that blacks would prosper; their encouragement and aid through the Courier are significant, even though blacks were excluded from the experiment itself.

During the 1920's, when the revived Ku Klux Klan was prospering throughout the nation, the colony once again provided support for Negroes. In 1925, local Klan members petitioned the colony to parade through the streets of Fairhope and stage a rally in the ball park on the night of July 4th. [52] At first the council denied the request, saying that it could not allow public property to be used by a group that refused to disclose any members that could be held responsible for its

actions.[53] The rally was eventually permitted, however, after several citizens assumed responsibility for the affair. E.B. Gaston was still not satisfied with these condtions, though. In fact, he took out a personal add in the Courier which read:"I am opposed to the granting by the town council of a permit to the Ku Klux Klan or any other organization for a masked parade on the night of July Fourth, and invite others who oppose to join me in protesting the same."[54]

By the time of the next town council meeting Gaston had secured the signatures of 96 people objecting to the Klan march. He argued at the meeting that he could not see anything "American" in an "Empire," invisible or otherwise, and he suggested that if the Klan's motives were wholly good, the organization would not insist upon its secrecy.[55] More signatures were eventually added to the petition and a Courier editorial the next week applauded those who had signed it, calling them "men and women who are unafraid to stand up and be counted for whatever course or cause appeals to them."[56] Their objections were not in vain, however. The Klan rally was held, but members did not wear masks. The next edition of the Courier even went so far as to congratulate the KKK for what it called the best fireworks show in Fairhopes history.

The Klan incident illustrates the degree to which the colonists of Fairhope were willing to stand up for unpopular views in the face of prevailing opposition. Though the conflict took place more than fifteen years after the period with which this paper is most concerned, the colonists' stance in the controversy reaffirms their true respect for human life and their desire for equal opportunity for all. They were not able to entirely stop the Klan's proceedings; nevertheless, they expressed dismay with the rhetoric of racial and ethnic prejudice.

The Negroes in the vicinity of Fairhope were undoubtedly better off than thay would have been without the single tax colony's presence. Although the colonists recognized that they would be unable to drast-

ically alter the condition of blacks in the area, they did encourage them to develop and prosper. They created an atmosphere conducive to racial equality that was probably foreign to the rest of the South.

In some ways the single tax colony created a community in Fairhope that was similar to northern towns at the time. Our notion of the northern village might seem to conflict with the colony's policy of excluding blacks; but it must be remembered that the American North was no model of racial mixing in the years after the Civil War. The great majority of blacks still lived in the former slaveholding states of the South. If northerners seemed to deal better with the racial issue it was in part because they rarely had to do so. Northern cities tended to be a good deal more segregated than southern cities did. In this respect, therefore, the Fairhope colony was more northern in racial make-up than it was southern.

But Fairhope also approximated a northern village in that it promoted a congenial atmosphere in which blacks could work to ameliorate their condition without excessive fear that whites would retaliate with violence. The colonists were not, as we have seen, devoid of any racial prejudices and misconceptions. Their attitude, however, was not one of contempt; it was one of support. Fairhopers might not have believed that blacks were equal to whites in terms of ability, but they did encourage the blacks to narrow the perceived gap that separated the races. That the colonists' attitude was supportive at all indicates that they made a conscious effort to help southern blacks. The colonists, whether they realized it, followed the advice of Seneca when he wrote: "It is every man's duty to make himself profitable to mankind; if he can, to many; if not, to fewer; at least to himself." The Fairhope Single Tax Colony was limited in what it could do; it wisely sought to achieve that which was possible.

In an age when racism dominated, Fairhopers were years ahead of the

prevailing sentiment. In a region that generally bred antagonism, they acted with uncommon good will. If Fairhope's positive actions toward racial equality were limited, it is because the circumstances dictated limitations. But when the colonists promoted the Negro cause, they did so with great courage and foresight. In the worst of times, they were among the best of men.

ENDNOTES

[1] Fairhope Courier, October 15, 1895.

[2] Courier, August 15, 1894.

[3] Letter from John Ettel to E.B. Gaston, December 8, 1894.

[4] J. Bellangee, Single Tax Review, N.Y., October 15, 1903.

[5] Fairhope Single Tax Colony Minutes, April 22, 1895.

[6] Paul Gaston, "The Discovery of Nancy Lewis,"

[7] Colony Minutes, June 10, 1895.

[8] Courier , February 15, 1895.

[9] Ibid., April 1, 1908.

[10] Ibid, June 12, 1908.

[11] Ibid, November 1, 1901.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid, October 13, 1905.

[14] Ibid, June 12, 1907.

[15] Ibid., February 1, 1898.

[16] Ibid., April 1, 1898.

[17] Donald Stephens, "The Three Ardens," in Harry Gunnison Brown et. al. Land Value Taxation Around the World, New York, 1955, p. 123.

[18] Courier, Feb 15, 1903.

[19] Ibid., August 21, 1908.

[20] Ibid., July 12, 1907.

[21] Ibid., September 21, 1903.

[22] Ibid, December 1, 1903.

[23] Ibid., June 1, 1901.

[24] Ibid., October 14, 1898.

[25] Ibid, January 21, 1906.

[26] Ibid., March 15, 1902.

[27] Ibid., March 15, 1895.

[28] Ibid., January 15, 1902.

[29]Ibid., November 22, 1907.

[30]Ibid., October 26, 1906.

[31]Sir George Campbell, "Progress of the Black Race," Black Image, ed. Lenworth Gunther, N.Y. 1978.

[32]Courier, February 23, 1906.

[33]Ibid., July 12, 1907.

[34]Ibid., January 1, 1901.

[35]Ibid, January 25, 1907.

[36]Ibid, May 12, 1905.

[37]Ibid, February 8, 1907.

[38]Ibid., Ocbober 15, 1901.

[39]Ibid., June 15, 1902.

[40]Ibid., October 2, 1908.

[41]Ibid., July 24, 1908.

[42]Ibid., November 16, 1906.

[43]Ibid., October 26, 1906.

[44]Ibid., March 20, 1908.

[45]Ibid., November 23, 1904.

[46]Manuscript Census, 1900.

[47]Ibid., 1880.

[48]Courier, December 5, 1904.

[49]Minutes, June 3, 1907.

[50]Courier, July 12, 1907.

[51]Minutes, July 17, 1922.

[52]Courier, June 5, 1925.

[53]Ibid.,

[54]Ibid., June 5, 1925.

[55]Ibid., June 12, 1925.

[56]Ibid., June 19, 1925.